

Things Change by orphan_account

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Drugs, F/M, Swearing, Underage Drinking

Language: English

Relationships: Eleven & Mike Wheeler, Eleven/Mike Wheeler

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2017-11-21

Updated: 2017-11-24

Packaged: 2022-04-03 04:56:48

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: Rape/Non-Con

Chapters: 5

Words: 8,618

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Two years have passed since Eleven went missing. A distraught Mike has pulled away from the party and made friends with his middle school bullies.

What happens when one day in sophomore year a mysterious character from his past resurfaces?

1. Chapter 1

Mike sighed, smoke blowing from his nostrils as he leaned back against the hood of his car. He was stood next to his group of friends, various pairs of which were heavily making out. He rolled his eyes as he watched James and his girlfriend Sarah's tongues rolling against each other. He faked a gag, prompting a laugh from Troy who was next to him.

"What's wrong, Wheeler? Queers can't appreciate some good ol' tonsil hockey?" James asked, pulling away from Sarah. Troy's barking laugh and Mike's eye roll was the only response James received.

Mike huffed, throwing the butt of his cigarette to the ground and stomping it out. He turned to head towards the front doors of the high school when he noticed a commotion at the bike racks. He watched curiously as his old best friends huddled together, talking in excited whispers and peeking over their shoulders at Mike every few seconds. When Dustin and Mike made eye contact Mike glared at him. Dustin hushed the whole group abruptly before they began to head into the high school, attempting to appear nonchalant and failing miserably.

Mike was sitting in his AP Physics class, attentively take notes, when he felt a harsh poke in his shoulder blade. He turned around giving the girl behind him a dirty look as she shoved a note into his hand and pointed at Dustin.

Quarry at 4:30pm. Please come.

Mike looked up at Dustin who was giving him a hopeful look. Mike crushed the note in his palm and turned back to his notes, not missing the deflated look from Dustin out of the corner of his eye.

The teenagers were sophomores now and Mike hadn't hung out with the party in nearly two years. Following Eleven's sudden disappearance Mike had withdrawn from the group, slowly turning in on himself until suddenly he was friends with Troy and James, his middle school bullies. He was just as confused about the turn of

events as the rest of his classmates and the disappointed looks he received from the party had still stung, even two years later, but this was the only way he could truly escape the pain of missing Eleven. With Nancy gone away to university and him no longer being friends with the party, no one in his everyday life even knew of Eleven's existence. He could now pretend that the heartbreaking week in November of 1983 had never happened.

That is how he managed to move on. At least that's what he told himself. Everyone around him knew that he wasn't okay and hadn't been for the last two years. Despite suddenly being somewhat popular thanks to his new group of friends and puberty, Mike didn't date. He had shot up a good foot since middle school, nearing 6 feet now, he had filled out, and his hair had suddenly sprung up into tight curls. Said curls were the topic of conversation amongst many girls in school, which delighted his new friends but thoroughly embarrassed Mike. He constantly received invitations to dates from a myriad of girls but he turned each and every one down.

On top of his new-found popularity, Mike had picked up the habits of his new friends. He now found himself with a fouler mouth than Dustin and spent his weekends with his friends drinking and smoking. One thing that hadn't changed however, was his performance in school. Initially that had gone downhill as well, but upon entering high school Mike decided he needed to refocus if he ever wanted to get into a good school and get away from Hawkins.

Mike spent the remaining 20 minutes of the period thinking about the note. How would he get away from his friends to go to the quarry alone? What would he say to his old friends when he showed up? What could they possibly want from Mike?

The bell rang and everyone shot out of the classroom, excited that the school day was now over. Dustin purposely elbowed Mike as he pushed past the taller boy on his way to his locker. Mike looked over at Dustin, biting his lip as he watched him begin to chuck his belongings into the locker haphazardly.

"Wheeler! You coming to Benny's?"

Troy had come up behind Mike who was now stood in the middle of

the hallway blocking the end of day student traffic.

“Uh, sorry, Troy.” Mike stuttered out, turning to Troy. “I can’t. I told my mom I’d pick Holly up at the elementary school and take her to her dance class.”

“Fucking gay,” Troy laughed. “You’re our ride, Wheeler!”

“Find another,” Mike responded, pushing Troy and heading towards his locker.

“Guess we’ll have to.” Troy laughed again, following Mike. “So, Marcy is having a party tonight.”

“Marcy?”

“The one Brad’s been fucking,” Troy reminded. Mike nodded in remembrance, continuing to stuff his books into his bag. “9 o’clock. Be there, Wheeler!”

Mike nodded again and Troy took off down the hall as James declared they had found another ride to Benny’s diner.

Mike looked down at his watch, he had 30 minutes before he was expected at the quarry. He was now slumped in his car, trying to decide where to drive. He finally decided on just heading straight to the quarry.

He pulled up at 4:15pm, the first to arrive, as he expected as it took longer to bike to the quarry than drive. Mike decided to spend his fifteen minutes of peace smoking in an attempt to calm his nerves about meeting with his old friends.

At 4:25pm all four members of the party pulled up next to Mike’s car on their bikes.

“I told you guys he’d come!” Mike heard Will mutter to the group, groans being the only response from the others.

“So,” Mike began clearing his throat and stubbing out his cigarette. Will had asthma and he knew cigarette smoke irritated the poor boy’s lungs. “Why am I here?”

"You didn't have to come, asshole! Don't act like-" Max began before being cut off by Dustin. She glared at him but remained silent, joining Lucas in glaring silently at Mike instead.

"Mike, we have some news," Dustin began. "Like, really, really good news. Like, the best news you've ever gotten in-"

"What is it, Dustin?" Mike cut in, knowing Dustin would continue rambling if he didn't keep him on track.

"Eleven's back!"

Mike could swear his heart stopped beating in that moment. His eyes widened as his face became sickly pale and his mouth became dry.

"What?" Mike croaked, his voice cracking as his throat became tight and his eyes itchy.

"We found, Eleven."

Mike suddenly lunged at Dustin, pushing him to the ground.

"You fucking asshole!" Mike screamed as he began shaking Dustin, ramming his shoulders into the dirt repeatedly, tears pouring down Mike's face. "This isn't fucking funny! I know you hate me, but this isn't funny!"

"Mike! Stop!"

The other three teenagers swooped in, pulling Mike's sobbing form from a shocked Dustin.

"What the fuck?" Dustin asked incredulously, pulling himself up off the ground.

"He's not lying, Mike," Will told him softly, crouching next to the crying boy leaning against the car. "She's alive."

"Where?" Mike's voice was scratchy and rough.

"She's at my house right now. We can-"

Mike was already on his feet and opening the door to his car before Will had finished his statement. Mike's car started with a rumble and he sped off as fast as he could to the Byers' house as the party pedalled furiously behind him.

Once he arrived, he barely remembered to turn the car off before he was rushing up the steps to the Byers' front door. The party were now in view of the house and Mike was furiously knocking on the door.

He jumped back in surprise when the door swung open to reveal Chief Hopper. The party had now made it to the house and were throwing themselves off their bikes and rushing up behind Mike. Mike still had tears flowing freely down his cheeks, much to his embarrassment.

"Chief-" Mike began, his statement cut off by a choke. The door opened further to reveal a girl with curly brown hair in jeans and a pink sweater standing behind Hopper. El. His El.

Eleven let out a quiet sob, rushing past Hopper and towards Mike. Mike felt the wind being knocked out of him as he was almost bowled over by the young girl. Instinctively, his arms wrapped around her waist, his nose buried in her sweet-smelling hair, as he placed repeated kisses to the top of her head. Eleven's arms were holding Mike equally as tight and her face was pressed to his neck as she cried freely.

The party, Chief Hopper, and Joyce all watched the sobbing teenagers in the doorway. It was some minutes before the sobbing slowed and the hushed whispering began. They couldn't make out what the two were saying to each other, but all busied themselves in the Joyce's kitchen feeling as though they were intruding on a private moment. As much as Hopper wanted to break it up, he knew he owed this to his now daughter. He had kept her hidden away from her friends for two years now. She deserved this.

"Are you really here?"

Eleven let out a water giggle and nodded. Neither individual moved from their tight embrace, instead speaking into each other's skin producing muffled sounds.

"I missed you," Mike whispered.

"I missed you too, Mike."

Mike took a deep breath, nervous but completely sure of what he was about to say. He had really only known the girl for a week, but over the last two years had come to terms with the fact that she was the love of his life.

"I love you so much," he whispered again, directly into her ear and pressing a kiss to the side of her head.

Eleven pulled back slightly, enough to peer up at Mike with a smile. She moved her hands up to his face, holding his cheeks in her hands and pressing a soft kiss to his lips. The kiss quickly turned heated, two years of pent up emotion pouring out of each teenager. Eleven pulled back breathlessly.

"I love you, too," she whispered, wiping a stray tear from Mike's cheek.

Mike smiled, his stomach aching at how happy he currently felt. He leaned down, resting his forehead against hers and just enjoyed the feeling of having Eleven in his arms.

"Okay, okay. We all need to have a chat now," Jim Hopper interrupted after what he felt was a sufficient amount of time for the reunion.

Mike reluctantly let Eleven slip out of his arms, but refused to let go of her hand. They followed Hopper to the kitchen table where the rest of the party were sitting enjoying snacks. Joyce smiled softly at Eleven and Mike as they sat in adjacent chairs, moving as close together as possible.

"Okay," Hopper began, unsure of what to say. "So, Mike, we've already gone over this with the other kids but I think I owe you an explanation of where Jane has been."

"Jane?"

"My name," Eleven whispered, squeezing the hand clutching hers in

her lap under the table.

“Jane,” Mike repeated, his eyes warm as he looked over at Eleven. Eleven took in Mike’s altered appearance fully for the first time in two years. He looked different, older with curlier hair and clothing that was unlike the rest of the party’s. But he still looked like her Mike. Although Eleven loved having a real name, being called Jane by Mike felt wrong.

“No.” Mike eyebrows knitted together in confusion.

“Your name isn’t Jane?”

“No, it’s Jane. Just not to you,” Eleven finished embarrassedly, her cheeks a bright pink. Mike nodded in understanding, giving her hand a quick squeeze. He was the only one who ever really called her El and he would remain the only one who called her El.

“Wait, he gets to call you Eleven!”

“Shut up, Dustin,” Mike growled, glowering at the other boy.

“Anyways,” Hopper pressed. “Like I said, I owe you an explanation of where Jane’s been. She was with me. I found her –“

“What?” Mike asked, glaring at the man in front of him. His voice barely a whisper. “She was with you this whole time?!” Mike’s voice was steadily growing louder. The louder he got, the tighter Eleven squeezed his hand, trying to ground him in his anger.

“Listen kid-“

“No, fuck you!” Mike exclaimed, jumping from his seat, now standing eye level with Hopper. Hopper absently wondered when the kid had gotten so tall. “She was with you this whole time and you didn’t tell me! What the fuck!”

“You need to calm down!”

“NO!” Mike yelled, his hand still clutching Eleven’s, now in clear view of the whole table. “You fucking hid her from me. And you, did you all know?” Mike had now turned on his old friends, which

confused Eleven who wasn't aware of their fall out.

"Wheeler, they didn't know," Hopper sighed, rubbing a hand over his face. He knew the kid would freak out, he was always quick to anger and it had only gotten worse over the last two years if the scenes Hopper had broken up at high school parties in the last year were anything to go by.

"Why didn't you tell me!?" Mike roared, turning back on Hopper. Although the 16-year-old was in a rage, he also had a few betraying tears running down his face.

"Mike."

Mike turned towards Eleven instantly, his anger completely gone from his face when he turned to her.

"Sit. Please."

Mike did as he was told, much to Hopper's surprise.

"He was keeping me safe," Eleven explained, reaching up and wiping the tears from Mike's face with her thumb.

"But, he could have told me you were okay. I was so worried—" Mike continued, this time in a desperate tone directed at Eleven.

"I know," Eleven silenced the distraught teen. "I'm here now though."

Mike nodded and turned silently back to Hopper, refusing to make eye contact with the chief of police.

"I'm sorry, okay? I know you've had a hard time —" Mike cut him off with a humourless laugh, but didn't say anything further. "But I am sorry."

There was silence at the table.

"Um, so Jane is going to be starting at Hawkins High tomorrow." Hopper finished, looking between Mike and Eleven.

Mike suddenly looked up, surprised. A huge grin broke out across his

face

“Really?”

Eleven nodded, a small laugh bubbling up at the look on Mike’s face.

2. Chapter 2

Joyce had insisted that everyone stay at the Byers' for dinner, much to the discomfort of all of the teenagers except Eleven.

Mike was silent for most of the meal, disoriented by the loud conversation of the party and that warm, soft hand clutching his. He felt like he had gone back in time by two years and the universe was trying to push him back into being 14-year-old Mike, but he was still his 16-year-old angsty self.

He wasn't sure how four hours had passed so quickly, but it was nearing 9 o'clock and he was itching for a drink and a smoke. As much as Mike wanted to go to the party at Marcy's he also didn't want to leave the girl currently curled up at his side on the Byers' couch.

Eleven was watching him curiously, clearly confused as to why he was acting so distant towards the rest of his friends. He was still her Mike, but he looked annoyed and withdrawn from everyone but her.

"It's 8:30, Wheeler. Aren't you supposed to be going to Marcy's party?" Max asked, breaking Mike's thoughts about Eleven.

"How do you even know she's having a party?" Mike asked coldly. "I know you definitely weren't invited."

Max flipped him off in response and turned back to her boyfriend, refocusing on the television that was blaring reruns of some sitcom.

"Mike?" Eleven whispered, drawing Mike's attention back to her. "You're going to a party?"

"Well, um I don't know." Mike stuttered, unsure of how to navigate his new life as friends with Troy and James with the added component of having Eleven back.

"Can I come?" she asked quietly.

"You want to go to a party?" Dustin asked incredulously. Mike glared at him before turning back to Eleven.

"Absolutely not," Hopper interrupted, emerging from the kitchen. "I have been called to break up one too many of your friends' parties, Wheeler."

"I want to go," Eleven pressed, looking at her father sadly.

"No, you have your first day tomorrow. You aren't going to some high school kegger tonight!"

"It's not a kegger," Mike reasoned, but Hopper's harsh glare silenced him.

"I want to go," Eleven repeated, her stare wearing her father down slightly.

"No, maybe another time, Jane. Not tonight--"

"I want to go with Mike," Eleven continued. "I want to be a normal teenager. Parties are normal, right?"

"She has a point, Hop," Joyce joined in from next to Hopper.

"I'll have her home by 11 o'clock, sir," Mike added, deciding that having El at the party would actually be fun.

"No drinking," Hopper begins, staring at Mike.

Mike nods vehemently as though he would never even think about drinking at this party. Hopper sighs, fully aware that the kid is lying to him.

"Call me if you need me, okay?" Hopper tells Eleven who nods excitedly, pulling Mike to his feet.

"Come on, guys!" Eleven calls to her friends who are still lounging around the living room.

"Um, El, I don't think they're coming," Mike mutters awkwardly, rubbing the back of his neck.

"Why?"

“We don’t feel like it,” Will jumps in. “You guys have fun though, okay Jane?”

Eleven nods sadly and follows Mike out of the house.

“You drive?” Eleven asks with surprise when Mike holds the door to his car open for her to slide in.

“Yeah,” Mike laughs. “Did you think I was gonna take you on my bike?”

Eleven blushes and looks at her lap. Mike chuckles again as he slides into the driver’s seat.

“I really missed you, you know,” Mike tells her before pressing a kiss to her cheek causing her to blush further.

They pulled up to Marcy’s house not long after 9pm, but the party looked as though it was already getting rowdy.

The two walked towards the house hand in hand. Mike noticed her nervous fidgeting and stopped her as they walked up the driveway.

“Hey,” Mike whispers, taking her face in his hand and tilting it softly to make eye contact. “If you need anything or want to leave, just tell me. Okay?”

Eleven nodded with a small smile. Mike leaned in to press a soft kiss to her lips. It was long before he heard the familiar hooting and hollering of his friends from inside the house.

“Fucking eh, Wheeler!”

Mike pulled away from Eleven and rolled his eyes.

“Ready?” Eleven nodded response and they continued to make their way up the driveway.

Mike pushed the door to Marcy’s house open as soon as they reached the top step, confusing Eleven. Weren’t you supposed to knock on someone’s front door if it wasn’t your house? She gripped Mike’s free hand tighter with both of her own, deciding to ask him later. He led

them on a winding path through the house towards the kitchen, looking back to make sure Eleven was okay every few seconds. Eleven was fine, but she was quite nervous having never been around so many people at once.

They finally reached the kitchen, Eleven still clutching on to him nervously, which made him feel oddly nice. As though she was relying on him to protect her. He was well aware she didn't need his protection however.

"Want a drink?" Mike asked, smiling down at the much shorter girl next to him, disentangling their hands and wrapping her in his arms.

"But, Hopper said –"

"Who the fuck is talking about that asshole?" Troy interrupted, approaching the couple in the kitchen. Eleven turned in Mike's arms, glaring at Troy.

"Um," Mike cleared his throat. "El, this is my friend Troy." Eleven looked up at him worriedly. She remembered this boy as the bully from two years ago. "Troy, this is my – um – this is Jane. She starts school with us tomorrow."

"Nice," Troy responds, eyes trailing up and down Eleven's form before quirking his eyebrows at Mike. Anger boiled in Mike, unhappy with the things he knew Troy was thinking about Eleven. "So, where have you been hiding her?"

"What?" Eleven asked in a high pitch voice, worry clear in her tone.

"She just moved to Hawkins to live with her dad. Chief Hopper." Mike responded, rubbing Eleven's back reassuringly. He knows she was concerned about the way Troy had phrased his question.

"No shit," Troy laughs. "Good luck with that, Wheeler!"

As Troy walked away in search of someone with some pot to share Mike turned to Eleven.

"Sorry about him."

“Mike,” Eleven began. “Isn’t he a mouthbreather?”

Mike burst out laughing at Eleven’s question. Mike hoisted Eleven up onto the counter next to them so they were eye level. He stood between her open knees holding her waist as she rested her hands on his shoulders, still looking at Mike with concern.

“Some things have changed a bit since you’ve been gone. Troy’s one of my friends now.”

Eleven accepted the explanation with a nod and decided she would press the issue further another time. There were too many people staring at them right now anyways. Most of which, Eleven noticed angrily, were female.

“So, do you want a drink?” Mike asked again. Eleven nodded hesitantly but the grin and peck on the lips Mike gave her in response pushed the worry from her mind.

Mike turned from Eleven and went towards the kitchen island nearby, laughing with a few people as he waited his turn to grab himself and Eleven drinks.

“Who the hell are you?”

Eleven looked away from Mike in surprise, to the blonde girl standing next to her.

“Jane,” Eleven responded hesitantly.

“Are you and Mike dating?” the girl asked, clearly unimpressed with Eleven’s appearance based on the way she was looking at her.

“Um – ”

“You should stay away from him,” the girl continued, not letting Eleven finish. With that the girl walked away leaving Eleven feeling very confused.

Mike had returned just as the girl was leaving with two red plastic cups.

“What did Stacy want?” Mike asked, peering suspiciously at Stacy and her friends. Stacy had been the most persistent in her requests to date Mike.

“I’m not really sure,” Eleven responded.

“Well, I would just ignore her if I were you,” Mike tells Eleven, handing her one of the cups. “She’s crazy.”

Mike watched Eleven silently, an amused smile on his lips and his free hand resting possessively on her thigh, as she took a sip from the cup he handed her. Her lips puckered unhappily as she swallowed causing Mike to chuckle.

“What is this?”

“Punch.”

“No, I’ve had punch before,” Eleven pressed. “What’s in this Mike?”

“Vodka, I believe,” Mike laughed taking a sip of his beer. “You don’t like it?” Eleven shook her head. “Wanna try my beer?” Mike asked, holding his cup out to her.

Eleven took a sip of the brown liquid before spitting it back into Mike’s cup.

“El!” Mike shouted with a laugh. “Don’t backwash!”

“That’s disgusting,” Eleven declared, taking a few gulps of her punch to get the taste of beer out of her mouth.

Mike grinned at her silently, accepting his beer back and drinking it despite Eleven’s backwash.

“Wheeler!”

Mike turned at the sound of his name, hand still on Eleven’s thigh. Troy and James were standing across the room holding a joint and beckoning him out the back door into Marcy’s yard.

“Go,” Eleven said, squeezing his shoulder.

“No, I’ll stay here with you,” Mike responded, turning back to Eleven.

“Mike, go your friends need you. I’ll wait here.”

Mike bit his lip, staring at the girl in front of him. He would be gone for maximum ten minutes, what could happen in ten minutes. Besides he really wanted to join his friends.

Mike pressed a kiss to her lips.

“I’ll be right back,” he mumbled against her lips still causing Eleven to laugh. “Here, I’ll get you another drink before I leave!”

Mike reached over to grab Eleven some more punch, handing it to her and pressing a kiss to her cheek before taking off out the back door causing Eleven to giggle. She wasn’t sure what was going on in the backyard, but she knew it must be important if he had taken off so quickly.

“I’ve never seen you before,” came a male voice to Eleven’s right. She set her cup down, finishing her second drink, and turned to look at a blonde boy about the same height as Mike. “I’m Kyle.”

“Jane,” Eleven smiled back.

“Jane, would you like another drink?” Kyle asked and Eleven nodded in response.

It had been at least twenty minutes since Mike had left Eleven in the kitchen and Eleven had already accepted numerous drinks from Kyle. He was going on about his position on the football team, a sport Eleven knew nothing about. As a result, she had been downing drink after drink to distract herself.

Another fifteen minutes had passed and the drinks were taking their effect on Eleven. She was swaying to the loud music and the edges of her vision blurred slightly.

“Hey, come with me!” Kyle announced as if he had sudden and wonderful idea. He helped Eleven jump down off the counter and the world tilted suddenly. She fell forward into Kyle, the effects of the drink suddenly seeming much worse than when she had been sitting.

Kyle led her up the stairs of Marcy's house, laughing as she stumbled every few steps.

"So, you're fucking Hopper's daughter, huh?" Troy laughed once they had smoked their second blunt.

The soft, happy high that had made Mike's head feel as though it had been filled with cotton suddenly turned into a panic.

"Shit!"

Mike took off towards the house, skidding into the kitchen and bumping into a few people who gave him dirty looks. He looked around the kitchen, eyes wild as he surveyed the spot he had left her. She had been replaced by a couple of juniors who were making out. "Fuck, fuck, fuck," Mike chanted under his breath and he began pushing through the crowd of people on the main level of Marcy's house.

"Mike, hey!"

"Not now, Stacy," Mike spat, pushing past her.

"Looking for someone?" she asked mischievously.

"Kinda, yeah."

"You know, I think I saw Kyle Brown taking some new girl upstairs like five minutes ago," Stacy started, making Mike's stomach drop. "Typical Kyle, has to fuck every new, shiny toy we get in Hawkins..."

Mike took off up the stairs, ignoring Stacy's smile. He ran down the hallway, slamming the door to each room open, disturbing a whole host of teenagers in various states of debauchery.

"El!" Mike called as he ran from room to room. Dammit, Marcy. Why did her house have to be so big?

Mike's blood ran cold as he peered into one of the final rooms in the hallway.

El. His El was laid back on a bed, struggling weakly against Kyle fucking Brown, her sweater on the bed next to her and Kyle's hand down the front of her jeans.

Mike grabbed the boy by the back of his shirt and yanked him back off the bed, choking Kyle slightly.

"What the fuck," Kyle protested. "Wheeler, what the fuck is your-"

Mike interrupted him with a punch that send blood rushing from Kyle's nose.

"Don't you fucking touch her," Mike roared, continuing to punch the blonde beneath him. "Don't look at her! Don't speak to her! You piece of shit!"

A weak cry of his name brought him back to reality and he released Kyle who groaned and slumped against the wall. He wiped the blood from his hands on his jeans before turning his attention to Eleven who was struggling to get up from the bed.

"El, I'm so sorry," he whispered, voice cracking.

He pulled her sweater on over her head and rebuttoned her jeans with shaking hands before picking her up. This wasn't the scenario he had pictured when had imagined seeing her in just her bra for the first time. She wrapped her arms around his neck and legs around his waist as he carried her down the stairs and out to his car.

3. Chapter 3

It was 10:30pm and based on the directions given to him by the Chief, the Hopper household was 5 minutes from their current location.

Tears streamed down Mike's face as he watched Eleven from the driver's seat, chewing his thumb nail. The girl had barely been conscious while he dragged her through the party from the upstairs bedroom, which explained why Kyle had gotten as far as he had without being thrown by Eleven's powers.

Eleven was curled up in the passenger sleep, fast asleep and wrapped in Mike's jacket. As hard as he tried he couldn't shake the image of Kyle on top of a struggling El's body, touching her in ways he shouldn't have. Touching her in ways no one had before, ways that we're Mike's job, at least if she allowed him to.

He chewed harder on his thumb, squeezing his eyes closed to stop the onslaught of tears. He hadn't cried so much in two years. He didn't know what the hell to do, but he had 30 minutes to get Eleven home in some way, shape or form.

Eleven mumbling his name and shifting in her sleep caught his attention. Mike had the sudden urge to hide her from the world and protect her forever. He swallowed, feeling guilty, as he was sure Hopper had felt the same way when he had found Eleven.

"Mike," Eleven sighed again, shifting uncomfortably in her sleep. Mike pulled her towards him, taking her up in his arms and pressing kisses to her head.

The girl woke, eyes and voice clearer than they had been back in the bedroom of Marcy's house.

"Mike, you're back," El whispered.

"El," Mike whispered, stroking his thumb across her cheek. "I'm right here. I won't leave you like that ever again."

“Mmmkay,” she mumbled, settling in to Mike’s chest.

Mike gave her another twenty minutes to rest, playing with her wonderful curls in the meanwhile. He hadn’t told her yet, but he thought her chocolatey-brown hair was beautiful. She had changed so much since 1983. While her height hadn’t changed much, her hair had grown down past her shoulders and she had apparently begun wearing makeup. Her body had developed in other ways, much to 16-year-old Mike’s appreciation, not that he would mention that.

“El,” Mike whispered a few minutes before they had to head to the Hoppers’ house. “Ellie?”

“Ellie?” Eleven asked with a smile, her eyes opening. Mike’s cheeks burned crimson.

“We gotta go or you’ll be back late and Hopper will kill me,” Mike told her, ignoring her teasing at his use of the new nickname.

Eleven climbed back into the passenger’s seat and Mike started the car, heading off in the direction that Hopper had described.

When they pulled up in front of the Hoppers’ new house, Mike helped Eleven out of the car and led her up the path to the front door. She was still hopelessly drunk but at least she could walk now.

Hopper opened the front door before Mike even had the chance to knock and gave the teenager a disapproving glare.

“Jane, you’re drunk.”

“No,” Eleven started with a giggle, leaning into Mike. “You’re drunk, dad!”

Mike sighed and closed his eyes, mentally preparing for Hopper to tell him never to speak to Eleven again.

“Go to bed, kid,” Hopper gave a sigh of his own.

Eleven lurched forwards, still unsteady on her feet, dragging Mike with her.

“No, El,” Mike began. “I can’t come with you. I’m just dropping you

off.”

Eleven pouted, turning and wrapping her arms around Mike’s neck.

“But I want you to stay with me,” she whined, pressing kisses all over Mike’s face as if she could change his mind and have him stay the night with her. Mike flushed, looking between Hopper’s angry face and the pouty, hopeful stare of Eleven.

“I know and I want to stay with you too-“

“Jane, that’s enough. Say goodnight.”

Eleven pressed her face to Mike’s neck and shook her head no like a toddler having a temper tantrum. Mike gulped, not wanting to upset either Hopper or Eleven.

Jim sighed, clearly unable to say no to the teenager and told the two that Mike could come in for five minutes but then he had to go home.

Eleven happily skipped past her father, dragging Mike into the house behind her. Mike stared nervously at the glaring police chief as he passed him.

Once inside Eleven had declared that she was tired and wanted to go to bed, causing Hopper to roll his eyes.

“Sir,” Mike cleared his throat nervously. “Why don’t I take her upstairs and convince her to go to sleep?”

Jim snorted. The kid had nerve, he’d give him that.

“Not a chance.”

“I want Mike to come upstairs!” Eleven declared and Hopper rolled his eyes, making a sarcastic flourish for the teenagers to go upstairs while he went to the kitchen.

Mike helped Eleven up the stairs, opening each door until he found her bedroom as she was no help when he asked which room was hers. He guided her over to her bed, helping her take off her shoes and then lifting the edge of her duvet while she climbed in.

“Mike,” Eleven whispered, staring up at him as he sat on the edge of her bed. He hummed a response to indicate he was listening as he smoothed back the curls atop her head. “I like when you call me Ellie. And El. But not Jane.”

Mike laughed pressing a kiss to Eleven’s lips.

“I also like kissing you. A lot.”

“I like kissing you too, El,” Mike smiled. This girl was the most amazing person in the world and no one could convince him otherwise. “I have to go, but I’ll see you at school tomorrow, okay?”

Eleven nodded sadly. He pressed another kiss to her lips.

“I love you, Ellie,” he smiled mischievously, causing Eleven to giggle.

“I love you too, Mikey!”

“Hey! No, I didn’t agree to that!” Mike laughed, tickling Eleven and causing her to roar with laughter.

“Time to go, kid,” Hopper announced, leaning on the doorframe to Eleven’s room. Mike gave Eleven one last smile before following Hopper out of the room and down the stairs.

“Sir, I’m really sorry I let El drink,” Mike began, his voice high and panicked. “I didn’t know she’d get so drunk. Not so fast!”

“Kid, it’s okay,” Hopper sighed. “I knew there would be drinking. I didn’t expect that you would also drive home though,” Hopper said with a pointed look.

“I’m not drunk, I promise. I barely had half a beer.” Mike rambled. “Thank you for being so cool and understa-“

“Wheeler,” Hopper interrupted. “It never happens again. Understand me?”

Mike nodded and with that left the Hopper household, promising he would never let any of what happened tonight happen to El ever again.

4. Chapter 4

The following morning was like any other. Mike stood in the parking lot of Hawkins High School with his friends, smoking and laughing as he leaned against the hood of his car. The only difference today was he was filled with nervous, excited energy. His eyes constantly flicked to the entrance of the parking lot, for once hoping to see Hopper's cruiser. He also noticed Max, Lucas, Dustin and Will near the bike racks looking equally as nervous and excited.

Suddenly, Mike became nervous for another reason. Would Eleven want to spend time with him or the party? He hadn't thought about this issue.

"Come on, does anyone have any aspirin? Wheeler, I know you're holding out on me man!"

Mike rolled his eyes before grabbing the bottle his mom had put in his glove compartment.

"Here, now shut the hell up, Troy," Mike called, throwing the bottle towards his whining friend. "Maybe next time don't get so goddamn drunk." Troy flipped him off before downing a few of the pills.

"Awe, shit," James' exclamation caught everyone's attention and all of Mike's friends followed his gaze. "What the fuck is Hopper doing here?"

Mike pushed himself up from his position atop his hood and began ruffling his hair nervously.

"It's Wheeler's girlfriend!" Troy laughed, remembering the small girl Mike had introduced him to the night before.

"For once in your life, shut the fuck up, Troy," Mike threw at him before turning back to the police cruiser that El was currently exiting. The smile on his face hurt his cheeks.

Eleven was pulling on her backpack as Hopper seemed to be lecturing her and she was nodding along. It was then that Hopper spotted Mike

and gave him an intense stare. Mike swallowed nervously. Hopper's staring had apparently caught Eleven's attention and she saw Mike. She quickly bid farewell to her adoptive father, slamming the passenger door of the cruiser and ran towards Mike.

"Mike!" she squealed, jumping up into his arms. He spun her around with a laugh before placing her back on the ground and kissing her nose.

"Hey, El," Mike smiled, missing the surprised and incredulous looks his friends were giving him for being so openly affectionate with this girl they didn't know.

Hopper watched from the car, giving the couple the same looks before shaking his head and heading to the police station for the day.

"Thought your name was Jane?" Troy asked, interrupting the couple who had moved on to smiling at each other adoringly. Eleven looked over at Troy nervously.

"It is," Mike confirmed, raising his eyebrows as if daring his friend to question any further. Troy held his hands up in surrender. "Like Troy said, this is Jane," Mike introduced, pointing out James and his girlfriend Sarah, Brad and the girl he happened to be seeing at the moment, Jake, and Ryan.

Eleven was holding Mike's right hand tightly the entire time, leaning back into him as he stood slightly behind her.

"Jane!"

Eleven looked over her shoulder in surprise, unsure of who would be calling her name on her first day. She really didn't know anyone. It was Max, much to Mike's dismay. Max had joined the party while Mike was slowly leaving it and the two had never really gotten along. Eleven waved happily at the group by the bike racks.

"What's the fire crotch want with your girl, Mike?"

Eleven looked back at James, unsure of how she should feel about what he had said about Max. She didn't understand what he had said, but the tone he used made it clear that it wasn't a complimentary

statement.

“Let’s go see Dustin, Lucas, Will, and Max,” Eleven said with a smile, looking up at Mike expectantly.

“Uh, you go. I’ll come get you before class starts,” Mike told her lamely, scratching the back of his neck uncomfortably.

“Mike?” Eleven whispered, confused as to why he was being so weird.

“I need to talk to Troy about something, go on,” Mike told her before kissing her softly and squeezing her hand in reassurance.

Eleven chewed the inside of her mouth nervously, but reluctantly let go of Mike’s hand and began crossing the parking lot towards the bike racks.

“What did you need to talk to me about, Wheeler? How nice your girlfriend’s ass is?”

“Shut the fuck up, Troy,” Mike groaned for what felt like the millionth time that day, hitting his friend lightly.

“Uh, oh,” Troy laughed. “Looks like you got some competition Wheeler.”

Mike gave his friend a confused look, following his gaze to where Eleven stood in the middle of the parking lot, halfway between Mike and his old friends. In front of her stood none other than Kyle Brown.

“That motherfucker,” Mike swore under his breath, pushing himself up from his spot on the hood of his car. He stalked towards the two teenagers in the middle of the parking lot. Kyle’s face was bruised, he claimed he had fallen at the party last night, but he was smiling predatorily at Eleven. At least Mike thought it was a predatory smile, maybe it looked entirely charming to the rest of the world. Mike could tell Eleven’s body was completely rigid, with anger or fear he couldn’t decide. She was slowly backing away from the jock. The two were stood so Mike could see both of their profiles.

He didn’t say anything as he approached the two, deciding instead to surprise Kyle with his notorious anger.

“Get the fuck away from her,” Mike hissed, roughly grabbing Kyle’s arm and pushing him so he fell into the side of a car.

“Calm down, Mike,” Kyle laughed, acting as though Mike’s anger was completely unwarranted. “Jane and I were just talking.”

“Mike,” Eleven’s quiet voice came from behind him. She had placed a hand on his shoulder. Mike reached up to place a hand on top of Eleven’s and squeezed it reassuringly.

“Stay the fuck away from her,” Mike spat, pushing Kyle one last time.

“That’s okay,” Kyle called, his voice dripping with delight. “I got what I wanted from her anyways!”

Mike looked back in time to see Kyle do the most vile thing he had ever seen, sniff his fingers then wave at Mike with a knowing smile. Mike’s jaw clenched and he lunged at Kyle. Or well, he had tried to but Eleven had managed to keep him rooted to the spot with her powers.

“Let me go, El!” Mike shouted, shooting daggers at Kyle with his eyes. Thankfully, Eleven was gripping his bicep so his statement wasn’t out of place.

“No,” Eleven whispered, walking around the still frozen Mike and standing in front of him. She took his face in her hands. “Please don’t get in trouble because of me. I don’t want that.”

“You don’t understand what he just did!”

“Mike,” she repeated calmly, watching as his anger withered in his eyes.

At some point, without even realising it, Eleven had released her hold on Mike. He reached up and wiped the droplet of blood falling from her nose with his sleeve.

“Okay,” Mike whispered, leaning down and resting his forehead on hers.

“Thank you,” Eleven whispered back, ignoring the stares from

students in the parking lot. "I love you, Mikey," she smiled, before turning on her heel and continuing her journey towards the bike racks where the party was watching the commotion.

Mike shook his head at the nickname and watched her until she made it to her friends, walking back towards his car one Max had enveloped Eleven in a friendly hug.

"What the fuck was that about?" James asked, once Mike had returned.

"I'm sorry Kyle Brown is such an asshole, Mike," James' girlfriend Sarah told him with a small, knowing smile. Kyle's reputation was known amongst the football team, as well as most girls in their grade, but frustratingly enough the rest of the sophomore boys either seemed to not be aware of how Kyle treated girls or were turning a blind eye to the rumours.

"Thanks," Mike muttered, lighting another cigarette before classes started.

5. Chapter 5

Mike crushed his cigarette with his heel as the first bell rang.

"I'll see you guys later," Mike called to his friends, starting in the direction of the bike racks where Eleven stood.

"I'll come with you," Troy called, following Mike. Mike stopped in his tracks.

"No."

"What? Why not?" Troy asked, surprised.

"Because you're gonna talk shit and upset them which will upset El," Mike told him, his voice low and face serious.

"Fuck off, Mike," Troy laughed, pushing Mike's shoulder lightly. "Let's go talk to the nerds." Troy, who had walked a few steps, turned when he noticed Mike hadn't moved. "Come on, Wheeler!"

Mike groaned, following Troy reluctantly.

"Hey, queers!" Troy shouted as they approached the group that had begun heading towards the main school doors. Eleven had been trying to hold them back to wait for Mike, while they were trying to convince her to come to class with them.

"Go to hell, Harrington!" Max called back, pulling on Eleven's elbow slightly, trying to usher her into the school.

"Wasn't talking to you, now was I?" Troy sneered. "I was talking to these faggots," Troy laughed, gesturing to Dustin, Lucas, and Will.

Mike's jaw clenched at Troy's words. Dustin was holding Lucas back and a very upset Will was staring at his feet.

"Troy, enough," Mike hissed, standing in front of his friend and pushing him in the direction of James and Sarah who were heading into the school. "Go to class, man."

Troy rolled his eyes at Mike, before throwing another slur at the group and jogging up to his other friends. Mike swallowed the anger that had begun to boil up in him once again. He let out a quick puff of air before turning to face Eleven and the party.

“Fuck you, Mike,” Lucas spat, roughly pulling his arms from Dustin’s grasp and stalking towards the school. Max had released Eleven’s arm and was now chasing after her fuming boyfriend.

Dustin followed, leaving Eleven staring at Mike with a calculating look and Will still rooted to the spot. Will shook his head, as if trying to shake the moment, and slowly began to follow Dustin.

“Hey,” Mike muttered, grabbing Will’s bicep and causing him to jump. “I’m sorry about Troy.”

Will nodded, not making eye contact with Mike, before pulling his arm from the taller boy’s grasp and continuing his path towards the school doors.

Mike bit down on his lower lip. This wasn’t how he wanted this morning to go. It was Eleven’s first day and he wanted it to be a good one.

“El,” Mike started, looking over at her.

“He hurt Will.” Eleven responded, a hard look on her face. She hadn’t recognized the words Troy had used and she wasn’t sure why they had angered the boys and hurt Will, but she knew that what Troy had just done was wrong.

“I know,” Mike whispered, looking down at his shoes and running his hands through his hair, pulling slightly.

Will was his best friend for years and the only one who played with Mike at recess in kindergarten. Mike was the only person Will had shared his crush on Jacob Henrys with, not fully understanding the implications of his feelings as an 8-year-old boy, but knowing that it was not something he wanted to share with anyone but his best friend Mike. Will had yet to come out to anyone in his life, but the rumors were rampant around Hawkins High and Troy knew exactly

what buttons to push to upset the boy and Mike had done nothing to stop it.

“Please don’t be friends with him, Mike.” Eleven’s soft voice and gentle hand grasping his pulled him out of his self-loathing.

“It’s,” Mike cleared his throat. “It’s not that easy El.”

“Yes. It is.” Mike swallowed the bile that he felt in his throat, knowing that Eleven was correct.

“We’re going to be late for class,” Mike whispered, desperately blinking back the tears in his eyes. He would not and could not cry at school. He had cried enough tears to last a lifetime yesterday.

“Okay,” Eleven whispered back, taking his hand and leading him towards the school despite the fact that it was supposed to be the other way around. She felt a little guilty for pushing Mike to cut his friendship with Troy, especially since he seemed so conflicted about it to begin with. On the other hand, she was mind numbingly angry at Mike for letting anyone treat their friends the way Mike clearly had for the last couple of years.

The scene by the bike racks had made Eleven and Mike so late that they didn’t have time to stop at their lockers, Mike instead rushing them towards Homeroom which they shared.

They arrived at their classroom right on time, Mike ushering Eleven towards the back of the room where he forced a guy to move to a vacant seat at the front with a flick of his head and a hard stare. Eleven sat behind the newly vacated desk self-consciously as Mike took the desk next to her. She eyed him curiously, feeling as though the way Mike had treated the boy was kind of mean, though nowhere near as mean as Troy had been earlier. It seemed to Eleven that there were varying levels of bullying and different types of bullies.

Mike tossed his bag to the ground absentmindedly before looking up at Eleven and giving her a smile. The gesture warmed her cheeks and made her stomach ache in a very nice way. She was hopelessly confused, stuck somewhere between hating the new Mike who walked around like he owned the place and loving the cheesy, nerdy boy from two years ago who resurfaced whenever he looked at her.

Eleven felt like she was getting whiplash.

The bell rang again signalling the beginning of first period, making Eleven jump. The sound was louder and much shriller when actually inside of the building. Their teacher greeted the class before announcing the arrival of a new student whose name he read off monotonously from a sheet of paper.

“-Jane Hopper.”

“Yeah, she’s-” Mike began, sitting up in his chair slightly.

Eleven placed a hand on his shoulder, squeezing gently and cutting Mike off midsentence.

“I’m Jane,” Eleven’s soft voice announced as she stood. She had to do this on her own, as much as she wanted to she couldn’t let Mike speak for her all the time, determining her role as a student at Hawkins High School.

“Hopper?” came Stacy’s voice from the other side of the room. “As in Chief Hopper?”

Mike opened his mouth to speak for her again but Eleven beat him to yet.

“Yes, he’s my father. I moved here from Chicago to live with him.”

Stacy eyed her, popping her gum loudly before turning back to the front of the room. Mike rolled his eyes in annoyance and Eleven took her seat once again.

The teacher then moved forward with taking attendance. Eleven sat patiently waiting for her name to be called, excitedly calling out a confirmation of her attendance when it was her turn. She had watched such scenes play out on the television and was thrilled to finally be able to experience such normal and mundane teenage things. Mike chuckled at Eleven’s excitement, grabbing her hand and giving it a brief squeeze.

Once attendance was taken, their teacher read off a list of announcements about a variety of bake sales, sports games, and

dances coming up. Eleven attentively wrote the details of each event in one of the notebooks she had picked out with Hopper, much to Mike's amusement. It was truly adorable watching Eleven's excitement about finally attending school.